

Week Ending Friday, October 4, 1996

Remarks in Longview, Texas

September 27, 1996

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Audience members. Four more years!
Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you very much. Folks, I would have come all the way to Longview just to see the Rangerettes and hear the Ranger Band. Thank you very much. I thank you for coming out on a little bit of an overcast day and keeping the rain away. I feel like the Sun shines on us in Longview today, don't you? *[Applause]*

Thank you, Martha Whitehead, for being a great mayor, a great state treasurer, for keeping your campaign commitment and working yourself right out of a job. Somehow I think that people will think you're entitled to a lot more good jobs in the future. Thank you for your leadership. Thank you, County Commissioner James Johnson, for being here. Thank you, Ann Richards, for your wonderful talk. I heard it in the back. Thank you, Texas Democratic Party chair and former Deputy Secretary of the Department of Energy, Bill White. He did a great job for us in Washington, and he's doing a great job for the Democratic Party here in Texas. And thank you, Garry Mauro, my friend of many years, for standing up for us, sticking with us, and waiting around until we finally got to the point where we can win in the State of Texas because we've done a good job for the people of Texas.

I also want to thank Max Sandlin for being here and for speaking earlier. And I want to ask you to send him to the United States Congress. We've got some great candidates in this part of Texas running for their first terms in Congress: Max Sandlin, Jim Turner, John Poulard. I hope they will all win. I hope you will help them so they can help you build that bridge to the 21st century that we've been talking about.

Thank you, Judge Frank Maloney, for being here. And ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to take a little personal privilege here and ask your retiring Congressman, Jim Chapman, who has served you well and worked hard, just to come up here and say one word. This is the biggest crowd he'll see in Longview until he leaves office, and I want him to have a chance to say hello to you. Come on up here, Jim.

[At this point, Representative Jim Chapman made brief remarks.]

Audience members. Four more years!
Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Thank you. Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, 4 years ago I had a pretty tough time here. I ran for President against two guys from Texas. *[Laughter]* It hardly seemed fair to me. I'm sure I spent more time in Texas than anybody else who had run for President recently. And you were very good to me. We had a good showing here. I've had an opportunity to come back to Texas many times in the last 4 years, and I want to thank all those who have been my friends and supporters through good times and bad.

You know, we had some tough decisions to make when I became President. But think what this country was like 4 years ago. We had high unemployment, the slowest job growth since the Great Depression, growing inequality because working people's wages were stagnant. The crime rate was going up. The welfare rolls were going up. The country was becoming more divided, and people were becoming more skeptical, even cynical, about our politics. And I believed it was because we did not have a unifying vision to take us into the 21st century.

And I have a simple, straightforward idea of what I want this country to look like in 4 years when we start a new century and a new millennium. In Longview, Texas, and every town like it all across America, I want

the American dream to be alive and well for everybody who is willing to work for it, without regard to where they start out in life. I want this country to be the world's strongest force for peace and freedom and prosperity, because our peace and our freedom and our prosperity depends upon America's ability to lead and stand up for those things in the world. And I wanted us to be a country that's coming together, not being torn apart by our differences. And I believe we can all say we're a lot better off by that standard today than we were 4 years ago. We're on the right track for the 21st century.

We've done it by trying to meet our challenges and protect our values with a simple little strategy: opportunity for all; responsibility from all; and an American community that treats everybody fairly and gives everybody a role to play.

Now, you look at the results and you think about the tough times in 1993 and 1994. When we were passing our economic plan, Mr. Morales' opponent said, "If the President's plan passes, unemployment will go up, the deficit will go up, we'll have a terrible recession." That's what he said. Well, now we know. A trained economist, they say. Four years later we have 10½ million new jobs, 900,000 here in Texas; the lowest unemployment rate in America in 7½ years; the lowest unemployment rate here in 15 years; in every single year a record number of new small businesses; the highest rate of homeownership in 15 years; 4½ million new homeowners.

And yesterday, in the annual report of the United States Census Bureau on how we're doing as a country in terms of our income, we got the following information. Last year, median—that's the people in the middle, direct middle, not the average, the people in the middle—median household income last year increased by almost \$900 after inflation, the biggest increase in family income in 10 years. Family income since that economic plan passed has gone up over \$1,600.

And even more important, more of us who are working are sharing in it. We had the biggest decline in the inequality of incomes and the biggest decline in the number of working Americans living in poverty in 27 years, from one year to the next. We had

the biggest decline in the number of children living in poverty in 20 years. We are on the right track, and we need to stay on that track to the 21st century.

We have increased education opportunities, from more children in Head Start to a better, lower cost college loan program, to the AmeriCorps program, to allow young people to work their way through college by serving in their communities. We're moving in the right direction.

The crime rate has gone down for 4 years in a row because of those 100,000 police Ann Richards was talking about. And when they told all the hunters in east Texas that the President was trying to take their guns away when the Brady bill passed, it sounded pretty good at the time, and we took a terrible licking in a lot of places in 1994. You would have thought I was going to knock on the doors myself and take people's guns away.

Well, guess what? Now we know. Now we know. Two hunting seasons have come and gone. It turns out that I was telling the truth. When we took the 19 assault weapons off the street we protected 650 kinds of hunting weapons. So 2 years later not a single hunter in Texas has lost their rifle. But 60,000 felons, fugitives, and stalkers could not get handguns because of the Brady bill.

So the crime rate went down. The welfare rolls are down by nearly 2 million in America. Child support collections are up by almost 50 percent—nearly \$4 billion a year more in child support collections. That's helping to move people off welfare and give families dignity and reinforce the responsibility of everyone to support their children. We are moving in the right direction.

And you know, when I ran for President—and I liked what Martha said. You know, she literally reinvented Government. She consolidated her job. I heard our friends in the other party, they always said the Federal Government is a terrible thing. It's nothing but waste. It would mess up a one-car parade. And they made a living—they owned the White House for decades, you know, just kicking the Federal Government around. They hated it so much, but they couldn't bear to be outside of it. It kind of tickled me. But they never did anything about it. They bad-mouthed it. They said how bad the Govern-

ment was. They said we Democrats were nothing but Government lovers and we would defend every program.

Well, guess what? Now we know. Our administration reduced the size of the Federal Government by 250,000. It's the size it was now when John Kennedy was President. As a percentage of our work force it's the smallest it's been since Franklin Roosevelt first took the oath of office in 1933. That's what we did to reinvent this Government. We're still serving you, but it is smaller.

We have reduced the burden of Federal regulations more. We have eliminated more unnecessary programs. We've given more authority back to State and local government. We've shared more authority with the private sector than they ever did when they had the White House. The only difference is we're doing it because we think it will help to create the conditions and give you the tools to make the most of your own lives. So we still believe we ought to balance the budget, but we don't believe we ought to wreck the Medicare program or the Medicaid program or undermine education or the environment. That's the difference.

Folks, you know, I spent the last 12 years of my life before I moved to Washington a lot closer to Longview than to Washington. And I was in Washington at a dinner last night, and Senator Dodd, the chairman of our party, said that he sort of felt sorry for me when I showed up. I'd never been in the House; I'd never been in the Senate; I'd never served in anybody's administration; I'd just been a Governor. I didn't understand how Washington worked, and it was more about talk than action.

[At this point, an audience member required medical attention.]

You need some help? Where's my doctor? I've got my medical team. We've got somebody here who fainted. We're coming. We'll bring it right there. Somebody hold your hand up, and we'll find you. They'll be right there. Here they are. There's nothing else we can do. You all just—let's go on with the show here; they're going to take good care of him.

Now, listen, when we came there the thing that bothered me about Washington was that

there was a lot of talk and very little action. Everybody spent all their time trying to get their 30 seconds on the evening news, seeing who they could blame for America's problems. And I said, we are going to change the way Washington works. We're going to stop asking, "Who is to blame" and start asking, "What are we going to do to get this country moving again and help people?"

So I tell you today, we are better off than we were 4 years ago. But we've got a lot to do. And we're going to be better off still. And I came here to ask the people of Longview and east Texas and this great State to help and join in in building that bridge to the 21st century.

Now, you know this approach is right; we are better off than we were 4 years ago. We don't need a U-turn. We need to bear down and go right on into that future. And I want to ask you to help us. I want you to help me balance that Federal budget. We've already taken the deficit down 4 years in a row for the first time since before the Civil War. They talked about it; we did something about it. But we've got to balance the budget in a way that is fair to everybody. We can protect education and the environment and research and technology, we can protect Medicare and Medicaid, and we can afford a targeted tax cut tied to childrearing and education.

I am very proud of the fact that on October the 1st, 10 million Americans will get an increase in their minimum wage. You may not know there is also in that bill tax cuts to help small business if they invest more, tax cuts to help small businesses—self-employed people that have to buy their own health insurance policy. And there is also a \$5,000 tax credit for any family that will adopt a child. That's pro-family, pro-work, and pro-business.

What I want to see us do now is to give the American people tax credits for childrearing. I want to see tax cuts for education. I want to see tax cuts for home buying. I want to see tax cuts for medical care. And I want to explain in a minute how all that works, but the main thing I want to say to you is we can afford the right kind of tax cut. But we should not have a tax cut that is a big, across-the-board tax cut that goes

to people like me who don't need it and that will increase the deficit again.

Now, every time I get on a plane and leave Washington, they say, "Now, Mr. President, the economy is going well now; don't go down to someplace like Longview and talk about the deficit. It bores people to death. They don't want to hear about it, and nobody cares about it except when times are tough." Well, let me tell you what it means. You go home tonight and you think about this. Because we cut the deficit by 60 percent, we're not borrowing as much money. That leaves more for you. That means interest rates are lower.

Now, last year our Republican friends put out a report that I agree with—I agreed with them last year, and I wish they hadn't changed their position—last year they said, "If we get off of this plan to balance the budget, interest rates will go up by 2 percent." Now, when you go home tonight, you think about what that would mean. If your car payment, your credit card payment, and your house payment went up by 2 percent, that would take your tax cut away right quick, wouldn't it?

Think what it would mean. Even worse, if all the little businesses up and down this street here and every other business in this country had to pay 2 percent more for a business loan, then small business would have a harder time expanding and growing and hiring new people. So I say, yes, cut taxes, but pay for every dime of it and still balance the budget. That's my plan. Help people educate their kids, help people build their families, but do it right.

The second thing I want to say is, we've got to build a bridge to the 21st century where every single person has a chance to get a world-class education. And I could keep you here until tomorrow at this time talking about the schools and education. But let me just tell you two of the things I want to do.

Number one, I want to see every classroom in this country and every library and every school in America hooked up not only with computers but hooked up to the information superhighway, to the Internet, to the World Wide Web. And let me say what that means—let me tell you what that means. If you're like me and you're sort of out of the

computer generation and it gives you a headache to think about all this, here's what it means in simple terms. If we can hook up every classroom in Longview to the World Wide Web, to the Internet, to all these other networks of information—and we did that in New York City and we did that in the remotest place in North Dakota—for the first time in history the kids in the poorest school districts, the kids in the most remote school districts would have access to the same information at the same level of quality and the same time as the kids in the richest public and private schools in America. It has never happened before. We could revolutionize education, and we ought to do it.

The second thing we ought to do is to make a college education available to every single person who needs it of any age. And here's my plan to do that in three little ideas. Number one, let more families save in an IRA, an individual retirement account, for their retirement, but let them withdraw from it tax free if they're using it pay for a college education, a health emergency, to buy a first home. Number two, make a community college education as universal as American in 4 years as a high school diploma is today. Make 2 years of education as universal by giving families a tax credit, dollar-for-dollar, off their tax bill for the cost of tuition at the typical community college in America today. Number three, give the families of this country a \$10,000 deduction for the cost of any college tuition, any vocational tuition, up to \$10,000 a year every year the kids are in college or their parents are in college. We ought to make this available to America, and we can pay for it and balance the budget. Will you help me build that bridge to the 21st century? [Applause]

I want to build a bridge to the 21st century where the crime rate goes down for 4 more years. If we take it down 8 years in a row it might be low enough for us to stand it. And I have some specific ideas. First of all, we've got to finish the job of putting those 100,000 police on the street. For reasons that absolutely amaze me, the Congress—this Congress—is still trying to stop us from putting police on the street, even though it is lowering the crime rate and preventing crime and helping kids to stay out of trouble.

Number two, we ought to do more drug testing of people who are out on parole. Sixty percent of the cocaine and heroin consumed in the United States today is consumed by people who are already in the criminal justice system in some way. You should not be on parole if you go back to drugs. That will make us a safer country.

Number three, we ought to fully fund our safe and drug-free schools act. We ought to have a D.A.R.E. officer in every grade school classroom that needs it in America, out there helping these kids to stay off drugs and stay out of trouble. For reasons I do not understand, this Congress has tried to cut that program in half. I want to do more. We have got to convince our young people not to get in trouble in the first place. We're not going to jail our way out of their problems, we've got to keep them on a good path to the future. We've got to keep them on that bridge to the 21st century. And we need to do what we can to help you folks, the parents, the religious leaders, and the people in law enforcement who are willing to go into these schools and help our kids. We need to support them in every way we can. We've got a program to do it, and I want to finish that job. And I want you to help me build that bridge to the 21st century.

I want to build a bridge to the 21st century where we have stronger families. And what's the biggest problem I hear from families all over this country? Everywhere I go they say, "We're having trouble doing our job as parents and doing our jobs. We're working harder than ever before, but our kids need us more than ever before."

That's why I'm proud that the first bill I signed was the family leave law. It's given 12 million families—12 million of them—the chance to take a little time off from work if they have a baby born or a sick child or a sick parent, without losing their jobs. And we're a better country because of that. It's been good for our economy.

I believe we ought to expand it and say you can get a little time off from work to go to a parent-teacher conference or a regular doctor appointment with your child, too. We do not weaken America's economy when we make it possible for people to do right by their children. We weaken America's

economy when there are millions of workers at work all over America worried sick about their kids while they're trying to do their job. I want to create a country where everybody who wants to work can work, where everybody has to work who can work, but where every worker can be a good parent, because that's our first and most important job. That is what I'm trying to do, and I want you to help me build that bridge to the 21st century.

And finally, let me say that I believe almost every American now understands that we can't build a bridge to the 21st century unless we find a way to improve our environment as we grow our economy. I'm really proud of the fact that we passed a safe drinking water law; we passed a pesticide protection act supported by all the farm groups and all the consumer groups, to improve the quality of our food; that we are working hard to clean up toxic waste dumps and we cleaned up more in 3 years than our predecessors did in 12. But I am concerned about the continuing environmental challenges we have, and I want to leave you with just one.

As you look at all these kids in the audience today, there are still 10 million American children—10 million American children—living within 4 miles of a toxic waste site. If you will give us 4 more years, we'll clean up the 500 worst sites so we can say, America's children are growing up next to parks, not poison. And that's a part of our bridge to the 21st century.

Now, folks, you have a clear choice in 39 days. Are we going to build a bridge to the past or a bridge to the future? Do we really think it's better to say you're on your own, or was my wonderful wife right—it does take a village like Longview to raise our kids and build our businesses and build our future? Are we going to build a bridge that's big enough and broad enough and strong enough for us to all walk across and that will be strong enough for our children and grandchildren to walk across?

You know, I want to ask every one of you to go out and talk to the people you know who aren't here today—it doesn't matter what their party is—and just ask them this, say, you know, the century only changes once every 100 years, and this country is changing dramatically, the way we work, the way we

live, the way we relate to the rest of the world. It is changing. And ask people, what do you want America to look like when we go into that new century? What do you want America to look like when our children are our age? In 100 years what do you want people to say that we did at this moment in time with our responsibility?

If what we do is to create opportunity for everybody who is willing to work for it, if we prove that unlike all these other countries that are torn apart by their differences, we can be a country of different races, different religions, different points of view, bound together by our fidelity to the American system and American values, that we can lead the world—that's what I want the story to be. If those are the questions people ask before the election in November, 39 days from now, I believe I know what the answers will be. You go out and reach out to other citizens so that we can go forward and build that bridge to the 21st century.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:55 a.m. at Tyler and Center Streets. In his remarks, he referred to former Mayor Martha Whitehead of Longview; former Gov. Ann Richards of Texas; Texas Land Commissioner Garry Mauro; State Supreme Court judicial candidate Frank Maloney; and senatorial candidate Victor Morales. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Interview With the Houston Chronicle and the Dallas Morning News in Longview

September 27, 1996

1996 Election

Q. We'd like to talk to you about Texas politics. But if I could just ask you one sort of Texas news-of-the-day question. Mr. Morales is in some hot water over remarks he made a couple days ago. What is your assessment of that?

The President. Mike put out a statement, and that's what I agree with. I think that he said something he regretted and he apologized for it, and I think that's a good thing. You know, if you stay in this business long enough, the closer you get to the campaigns,

the more you're working, the less you're sleeping, the more you're under pressure, you're going to—every now and then people say something that they wish they hadn't said. And I think the thing to do is just simply say that you wish you hadn't said it. And that's what he did. I thought it was a big thing for him to do. So that's what I think about it.

Q. Why do you think you can carry Texas?

The President. Number one, because Texas is better off than it was 4 years ago. The State of Texas has done well under our policies, both our general economic policies and the specific things I supported, like the space station and the V-22, which is made in Fort Worth, for example. Number two, my plans for the future would be better for the State of Texas than Senator Dole's program. And number three, Bill White and Garry Mauro and all these grassroots Democrats have worked hard to kind of rebuild the party at the grassroots level. And I've worked hard to try to change the relationship of the National Democratic Party of Texas for too long. The Democrats just sort of gave up on Texas. So they'd come to Texas and raise money and turn around and leave, and I thought that was wrong. And we've worked out an agreement—it's been in place now for some time, you know—sending a lot of the money that we raised back to Texas, try to help build the party.

And I guess, finally, because I think that last time when I ran I didn't really get a clear shot at the voters, even though I did campaign here a couple days. And I was from Arkansas and I had two opponents from Texas, and I think it sort of put me in a hole—that and then some of the things that happened early in my term. And I think that, you know, obviously now people are beginning to look at what my record is, what we've done, my ideas about the future as compared with my opponent's.

And I just think that for all those reasons we have a chance to win. If we can get people to look at the evidence, as opposed to kind of the accumulated rhetoric of the last 20 years, I think I've got an excellent chance to win.